

Volume 2. Number 8

October 2006

#### A Moment at the Mike

## The County Budget: Down to Details



Councilmember Knapp

On September 26, the County Council unanimously approved its priorities and performance measures for the county's FY2008 operating budget. I'm a big believer in priorities and performance measures -- I authored the 2005 legislation that required county programs, projects, and agencies to determine their priorities each year -- because I think its one of the most important things we can do in government to determine what you are getting for your money, and how we can spend it better, smarter, or determine whether we need to spend it at all.

Just the fact that we set priorities and performance measures for the first time last year was an encouraging start, and a good way to begin our discussion with the county agencies and departments that came before the Council to present their budgets. That gave us the opportunity to look at what departments and agencies think is important, where they think their vital services reside, and helped

us put it in a financial context. Now that we've got a year of experience behind us in thinking about and talking about budget and program priorities, though, I think we can begin to make out conversations a bit more detailed. In that alone, I'm pleased with what we approved in this year's budget resolution. If last year's resolution could be considered a rough sketch of our expectations, then this year's resolution is beginning to add some color at the edges as the Council begins to get more specific in its goals.

Now, as county departments and agencies begin to formulate their budgets for the coming fiscal year, the County Council, through its resolution, has provided them with some idea of our expectations, and a better sense of what it is we're looking for. This year, for example, instead of simply saying that we as a Council believe in investing in education, we talked about support for specific programs, like after school programs and libraries. And rather than merely reiterate our support for infrastructure, the Council discussed a focus on maintenance and support for technology. While it is not the intent of the Council to micromanage our county agencies, a little more specificity in our priorities, I think, can only better ensure expectations are clear and better managed across government.

Through the fall, the Council will continue to work with agencies and departments as they establish their own internal priorities and create more specific performance measures that will help us better gauge the effectiveness of the programs that receive your money. I'll do my best to

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keep you updated here in *The Open Mike*, and I encourage you to check in with the county's webpage from time to time to see what we're up to. This is your money we're talking about; you deserve to know how it's being spent and what you're getting for it.

As always, if I can be of any assistance, feel free to contact me at (240) 777-7955, or e-mail me at Councilmember.Knapp@montgomerycountymd.gov. It's my pleasure to serve.

Regards,

Mike Knapp Councilmember, District 2

# Putting the CCT on the Fast Track: Support Rally Slated for October 23

The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT)—a proposed light rail system that would connect the Clarksburg, Germantown and Gaithersburg regions with the Shady Grove Metro—needs your help.

As longtime readers of *The Open Mike* know, for the last two years, I've been promoting the CCT as one of the most attractive options to reducing the flow of traffic between the Upcounty and points south, like Rockville, Bethesda, and Silver Spring. The CCT has been in our planning documents for years, is eligible for Federal funding as part of the Federal Transportation Authorization Bill, and the county owns 80% of the right-of-way needed to build the light rail system. As far as mass transit options go, this one is a no-brainer – but it's also been one of the best kept secrets in the county. That needs to change.



A light rail car concept drawing.

However, time is running out. The CCT was approved by the state for preliminary study work through July 2007, and now we need to ensure the upcoming state budget includes continued funding for the design and planning phase of the project—or we run the very real risk of losing the project altogether.

Our job now is two-fold. We need to let decision makers at the state level know that we have a project that extends rail past Shady Grove, and then we need to ensure that our project remains

## **CCT** continued from page 2

competitive with other proposed projects vying for state funding, such as the Purple Line or the Baltimore Metro. I'll be promoting and pushing for this project with our state legislators and the governor—but we can only work best when we work together.

As part of this advocacy effort, I invite you to join me at a rally in support of the CCT, to be held at the east Kiss and Ride area of the Shady Grove Metro station on Monday, October 23, at 8:00 a.m. That's a Monday morning, and I know many of us have places to be—but before you sit in traffic that morning, come lend your voice, if only for a few minutes, in support of a viable mass transit option.

## Save The Date!

WHAT:	CCT Support Rally: It's Ready to Go!	
WHEN:	Monday, October 3, 8:00 a.m.	
WHERE:	East Kiss and Ride area Shady Grove Metro	

## Damascus Radio Towers Denied by Planning Board

#### **Board Cites Inconsistencies with Master Plan, Conservation Requirements**

At its September 28 hearing, the Montgomery County Planning Board recommended that the Board of Appeal deny a special exception that would permit the placement of four AM radio towers in the Damascus community.

The Planning Board denied the applicant a special exception based on six criteria:

- 1. The petition is inconsistent with the recommendations of the Damascus Master Plan regarding Rural Vista Protection, Bennett Creek headwaters protection, and Legacy Open Space Plan implementation.
- 2. The petition does not meet Forest Conservation requirements, and impacts existing recorded Forest Conservation easements.
- 3. The proposed use does not adhere to the Environmental Guidelines for Development, and includes a significant stream valley buffer encroachment.
- 4. The petition is not in conformance with Chapter 50, Subdivision Regulations.
- 5. The petition has significant unaddressed non-inherent impacts.

#### **Towers** continued from page 3

6. The petition does not comply with certain outlined general requirements for special exeption use in Chapter 59, Zoning Regulations.

"The fact that the FCC approved moving the towers to this specific location does not mean that public purpose is better served here than at their current locations in Frederick and Carroll counties or other locations in the region," wrote the Planning Board staff in its recommendations. "The staff is not convinced that there are no other locations, further from the Damascus Town Center (and not forested), that would serve this use." While process allows this application to go before the Board of Appeals, the Planning Board has advised the Board of Appeals not to consider an appeal from this applicant.

## County Reaches Agreement with Verizon for FIOS Cable Service



I'm pleased to report that Montgomery County and Verizon have reached an agreement on the terms that would allow Verizon to offer cable service over its fiber optic (FIOS) lines in the Montgomery County region. The County Executive will transmit this agreement to the County Council for review this week, for full consideration -- and likely passage -- in November.

As part of its agreement with the county, Verizon has agreed to support the county's public education and government

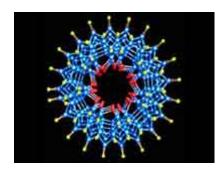
channels, provide cable television to public buildings such as schools, fire stations and libraries, and pay the county 5 percent of its gross cable revenues as franchise fees.

I'm pleased Verizon decided to drop its lawsuit—it was the main issue prohibiting us from making headway on this matter. According to Verizon, under the terms of the agreement and its current infrastructure, Verizon is ready to offer cable to about half the homes in the county by the end of the year. The initial services area will include most of the northern part of the Upcounty region. I've asked Verizon to continue its efforts to provide FIOS service to all parts of the county, including the southwestern region and other parts of the Upcounty that presently have no cable options at all.



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## Germantown Technology Incubator Still On Track; Montgomery College Will Share New Technology Facility



In a major step toward the continued integration of our county's higher education resources with private sector technology initiatives, the County Council on October 3 approved an appropriation that will green light a new business incubator facility in Germantown, to be shared with Montgomery College. With \$1.4 million from the state, and an eventual investment of \$5.4 million on the part of the County, the Germantown Technology Incubator will build upon the successes we've seen at the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center in Rockville to foster the growth of new high-tech businesses and industry.

During the Council's debate on this appropriation, the Council supported my request for an additional \$200,000 to be used to build a "clean room" in the incubator, a critical addition if we are to ensure our ability to assist companies in the emerging field of nanotechnology.

This initiative will also benefit Montgomery College, which will not only have access to the incubator program, but will also gain valuable classroom and research space—something that, as any Montgomery College student will attest, is sorely needed. The co-location of the College and the Business Incubator will also encourage a sharing of ideas, research, and entrepreneurial leadership between the business and educational communities.

The Germantown Technology Incubator represents a solid investment of our resources that should pay multiple dividends for the community, the county, and the state in the future, and I'm pleased with the progress we've made so far.

## Council Approves Soccerplex Lease Amendments; Park and Planning Proposes Funding, Lights, Artificial Turf



On August 2, the Montgomery County Council unanimously approved the amended lease for the Soccerplex. This new agreement will allow the Soccerplex to add a number of new fields, including lighted fields and fields with artificial turf. The agreement also addresses various concerns about extended playing times, preference for Upcounty or long-term-use teams, and maximum number of games.

To see an online version of the final Soccerplex Lease Amendments:

#### http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/bill/2006/20-06.pdf

On September 20, with the new lease amendments in mind, the Montgomery County Planning Board approved \$1 million in funding, new lighting and three artificial turf fields for the complex, which could allow for year-round play at the facility. Planners also opted to change the site of the

#### Soccerplex continued from page 5

new softball field from the north to the south side of Schaeffer Road. These recommendations will be submitted to the County Council for our consideration and approval.

Now, while all this is clearly welcome news for the hundreds of thousands of soccer fans in and around our county, it has also given some residents in the adjacent neighborhoods some cause for concern. The 166-acre Soccerplex is a beautiful facility, and a definite asset to our county—but by its very nature, it can also be noisy and very, very busy. Because the complex is located in a largely residential area in our community, I am sensitive to the needs of those in the surrounding community who wanted to ensure that, as we took the necessary steps to improve Soccerplex, we also worked to make the complex exist as harmoniously within its surrounding neighborhood as we possibly could.

For that reason, we're presently working with the Soccerplex, for example, to ensure that the new field lights illuminate the field of play, and not the backyards and living rooms of adjacent homes. And by careful scheduling of late games, we can reduce noise and traffic in the surrounding area. Working together with the Montgomery Soccer Foundation, which helps the county run the Soccerplex, I'm confident we can make the Soccerplex not only a world-class facility, but also an upstanding neighbor.

#### Park and Planning News

## Board Approves Transfer of Golf Courses to Revenue Authority

To consolidate the operations of public golf courses in Montgomery County under a single agency to address potential financial shortfalls, the Montgomery County Planning Board voted to move forward with a long-term lease with the Montgomery County Revenue Authority to operate all nine public golf courses in the county. Last year, the Revenue Authority earned \$734,000 from the five golf courses it owns and operates and Park and Planning lost close to \$500,000 on its four courses.

The Revenue Authority will run the golf operations, while Park and Planning will retain ownership of the land. The two agencies will sign a lease that will incorporate the terms of the operating agreement. When the lease is signed, it will be reviewed by the Montgomery County Council, which has final approval authority on the transfer.

For more information, contact the Montgomery County Planning Board at (301) 495-4600.

## "Open House" Gives Public Closer Look at Park Management

On Wednesday, October 11, and Saturday, October 14, Montgomery County Department of Parks Director Mary Bradford invites residents and park visitors to take a peek at how Montgomery County's 32,000-acre park system is managed, from the inside out.

Four free Open Houses will be hosted at Montgomery County Department of Parks maintenance facilities at Wheaton, Cabin John, Meadowbrook, and Martin Luther King, Jr., parks. "This is a

#### "Open House" continued from page 6

truly special and unique event for individuals and families," says Bradford, "especially for those who enjoy getting a rare peek behind the scenes." Families and individuals will be entertained by a variety of activities at each location, including presentations by Parks naturalists, facility tours, slide shows, equipment demonstrations, visits by Park Police officers, ballfield maintenance demonstrations, and Q&A sessions with Parks staff and managers. Cabin John will offer free miniature train rides and a chance to run the bases at Shirley Povich Field.

The four open houses are scheduled for:

#### Wednesday, October 11, 2006

Wheaton Maintenance Yard, 12012 Kemp Mill Road, Wheaton, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Cabin John Maintenance Yard, 7700 Tuckerman Lane, Potomac, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

#### Saturday, October 14, 2006

Martin Luther King, Jr. Maintenance Yard, 1120 Jackson Road, Silver Spring, Noon to 3 p.m. Meadowbrook Maintenance Yard, Meadowbrook Local Park (Candy Cane City), 9701 Meadowbrook Lane, Chevy Chase, Noon to 2 p.m.

For more information, contact the Montgomery Parks Southern Regional Office at (301) 299-1981.

## The Upcounty Road Scholar

## Signal for MD27 and Oak in Damascus To Be Installed Spring 2007; Traffic Study Underway for Increased Safety Near Matsunaga ES

Got a road that needs repairing? A traffic light that's out? Is there a street or intersection that you think needs a stop sign or crosswalk? One of my responsibilities is to make sure someone knows about it -- and to do what I can to get you information on your question or request as quickly as possible.

I stay in regular contact with the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and the Maryland State Highways Administration (MSHA), and provide each agency with a list of projects that need addressing in the Upcounty. Both agencies receive countless requests each week, and getting a response back can take some time. So bear with me -- if you don't see a particular project listed here, that doesn't mean it has been forgotten or neglected, but rather that I haven't received an updated report on its progress this month.

With this in mind, the Road Scholar section of *The Open Mike* provides an opportunity to give you the latest



Questions about roads, sidewalks, or construction in your area? <u>E-mail the Road Scholar</u> and let us know.

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information received from DPWT, MSHA, and others on the progress of requests that have been submitted on your behalf. It's also an opportunity for you to <u>let me know</u> of other projects that may need to be undertaken in your community. And speaking of letting me know of projects in your community, here's the latest from DPWT and MSHA....

#### Department of Public Works and Transportation Projects

<u>Signage at Shakespeare Boulevard at Frederick Road (MD 355)</u>: For drivers exiting the Milestone shopping center by using the Shakespeare Boulevard exit to turn onto MD 355, a lack of clear signage can make things confusing. I've received reports of cars turning left from the center lane, or traveling straight through the intersection from the left lane -- and the confusion is largely due to the fact that there is insufficient or unclear signage.

Because this intersection involves both a county and state road, DPW informed me that it will be working with MSHA to study this intersection to determine appropriate signage and lane designation markings

<u>Left Turn Phasing at Wisteria at Great Seneca Highway:</u> A draft study to determine if exclusive/permissive left turn phasing should be installed along Wisteria Drive at Great Seneca Highway has been completed by DPWT. The study is being reviewed fro final recommendations, at which point it will go to MSHA for concurrence.

<u>Richter Farm Road at Falconcrest Road</u>: To address safety concerns near Matsunaga Elementary School, DPWT's Traffic Engineering and Operations Section will conduct a traffic study to determine what actions might be taken to improve safety near the school, including possible changes to intersection controls along adjacent roadways.

Road Repairs in the Cherrywood Community (Olney): DPWT has confirmed it will be resurfacing MacDuff Avenue, Evangeline Lane, and Thorncroft Terrace in the Cherrywood Community, beginning in FY 2008 (which means resurfacing could begin as early as Summer 2007).

Extension to Valley Park Drive Opens in Damascus: DPWT's Division of Capital Development just completed a new, \$2.1 million road construction project in the Damascus area. Work was started last October to extend Valley Park Drive. Less than a year later, the new road is now open to traffic. The extension provides an east-west connection between Ridge Road and Woodfield Road. This extension conforms with the Damascus Master Plan, which recommended extension of Valley Park Drive to serve existing and future growth in the community.

The County's contractor built an 1,100 foot extension of Valley Park Drive that included storm water management improvements, a 400 foot long retaining wall, street lights, landscaping, a new sidewalk and a bike path. The project also provides safer access for residents of the Damascus Manor Townhouses. A notable addition to the project was a limited number of on-street parking spaces, at the request of neighboring communities.

<u>Muncaster Road to Re-open</u>: The section of Muncaster Road previously closed for construction will open to traffic by early October, ahead of schedule. This segment of the road, between the Agricultural History Farm Park and Hollingsworth Drive, has been closed since last June.

## The Upcounty Road Scholar continued from page 8

#### Maryland State Highways Administration Projects



Stoplight for Intersection of Ridge Road (MD 27) and Oak (Damascus): According to the Office of Traffic and Safety in the Maryland State Highways Administration's Traffic Engineering Design Division, the traffic signal for the intersection of Ridge Road (MD 27) and Oak in the Damascus area is scheduled for award on April 15, 2007. The Notice to Proceed is set for May 15, 2007.

Working with PEPCO and Allegheny Power, the light should be up and running within 60 to 90 days.

My thanks to the Damascus Community -- especially Warren Fleming and the staff at Damascus Community Recreation Center -- as well as Delegate Herman Taylor, and our advocates at MDHA for their invaluable assistance, and patience, as we moved this request through the State Highway Administration's long queue. The light will be a welcome addition in the Damascus community.

## **Vox Pops Voices From Around the Upcounty Community**

<u>A Note from Mike</u>: I receive countless phone calls, e-mails, and letters each day. Most are passionate, many are frustrated, and a few are downright funny...but all of them are thoughtful and well-intended. I think readers of The Open Mike will be interested to hear what their Upcounty neighbors have to say, whether they're across the street or across the county. With that in mind, the "Vox Pops" section of my newsletter features highlights from some of the correspondence and phone calls I've received in my office over the past month.



#### An Investment in Metro Is No Solution

"I have long said that putting all our eggs in the 'smart growth' idea is like betting on the Washington Nationals to win the NL East. Let me say that the bet on the ICC put all our eggs in one basket and has created a void in state transportation money for a long time. You bet the farm on it, now you have to

pay the piper for that bet. The ICC is fast becoming a fraud . . . And, yet to come will be the new estimates to do the job. I and many others probably have noted that the Metro is a high financial risk and an operation risk to bet our growth plans on.

Nobody wants to chip in financially, and the state won't because we bankrupt the Transportation Fund for ICC. Mechanically, the Metro cars cannot be made to handle much more load due to mechanical design of brakes and other mechanical structures. And, I bet the automatic train control system is so far outdated( old computers, old software) that it will take a significant upgrade of both in the near term. Bottom line, I believe the Metro is a poor risk to be your traffic congestion planning on". -- Pat

## Vox Pops continued from page 9

#### Listen Up: Seniors Won't Mind Living Near the Airpark

"I live in the East Village which is adjacent to the Webb Tract property that has continued to be under review for development. Our family is strongly against moving buses, other industrial vehicle equipment, storage or crushing of materials as use for the property. We are very supportive of the senior housing proposal for use of the land. Montgomery Village is a neighborhood of families that include children and seniors. We'd like to see that theme continue in the surrounding area. I'm not sure why the airpark would be concerned about opposition by seniors to their airport. It is my experience that many seniors have limited hearing capacity anyway. In addition, many seniors in the area are retired military who have experience with living near, around or working by air traffic. I believe that using appropriate sound resistant material in the homes will filter any potential issues with the noise level." -- Sharon

#### **Expand Hours for Lap Swimming at Germantown Complex**

I was a little disappointed with the new County Pool Complex in Germantown. We arrived midmorning on a Saturday and were surprised that the complex would be unavailable for lap swimming and bathing for several hours. Apparently the complex sets aside certain periods for lessons and classes. I have been frustrated by exercise class schedules and thought this would be a good opportunity to investigate the Complex as an alternative to my club. Besides my frustration at the situation, I did not see that more than five people were using the two pools that one can see from the entrance. As our next resort, we headed to outdoor pool near Schaefer Rd, but its doors did not open until about the same time as the lap swimming begins at the Complex. Is there any way to make lap swimming available at all hours the complex is open? There certainly seems to be enough room for this activity even if other things are scheduled." -- Gary

#### **Comcast Providing Less and Less for More and More**

"We have just received notice of *another* rate increase, the second this year. Along with the rate increase was a notification that The Hallmark Channel, one of our favorites has been moved to digital cable. This was done due to a contract signed by Comcast Cable to allow broadcast of the Nationals games (we don't like or watch baseball). Each time the rate increases, another one of our favorites is moved to digital cable. The bottom line is, we are being charged higher rates for *less* service and choice. Since we began subscribing to cable service in December 1994, the cost has close to doubled, outpacing the rate of inflation and even the rate of increase in medical care (now that's *bad*). Either put some type of price controls in place or require Comcast to offer a wider array of packages to allow us to pay for only the channels that we want or open the market to more competition from other companies. As you are aware, people vote their pocketbooks and we are no exception. This problem is out of control and has gone on for far too long."-- *Alan and Sherry* 

## County Council Public Hearings Calendar

## Appropriations for Parks, Aging Schools Under Consideration; **Clarksburg Corrective Map Amendment Set for October 24**

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
October 10	1:30 p.m.	Resolution to approve the Franchise Agreement for Use of Public Right of Way: Xspedius
	1:30 p.m.	Bill 38-06: Technical Corrections
	1:30 p.m.	Supplemental Appropriation to the County Government's FY2007 Capital Budget and amendment to the FY2007-2012 CIP: - DPWT, \$1,608,000 for Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility
	1:30 p.m.	Supplemental Appropriation to the MCPS FY2007 Operating Budget: - \$360,171 for Aging School Program
October 17	1:30 p.m.	FY2007 Special Appropriations and CIP amendments-Parks:  (1) \$2,545,000 for Acquisition: Local Parks  (2) \$2,000,000 for Acquisition: Non-local Parks  (3) \$1,087,000 for South Germantown Soccerplex  (4) \$3,800,00 for Lake Needwood Dam Remediation  (5) \$563,000 for Ballfield Initiatives  (6) \$188,000 for Restoration of Historic Structures  (7) Rock Creek Trail Pedestrian Bridge  (8) Wheaton Tennis Bubble Renovation
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriation to the County Government's FY2007 Operating Budget, State Attorney's Office: - \$81,400 for Family Violence Unit
	1:30 p.m.	Resolution to establish FY2008 Spending Control Limits for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)
October 24	1:30 p.m.	Expedited Bill 39-06: Streets and Roads-Fees-Preliminary Subdivision Plans
	1:30 p.m.	Subdivision Regulation Amendment 06-02: Fees-Preliminary Subdivision Plans
	1:30 p.m.	ZTA 06-24: Home Occupations-Furniture Displays
	1:30 p.m.	Clarksburg Corrective Map Amendment (G-857)